



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill
Middle District of Florida

Tampa

Orlando

Jacksonville

Fort Myers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 21, 2008

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr>

CONTACT: STEVE COLE

PHONE: (813) 274-6136

FAX: (813) 274-6300

SERIAL AIRCRAFT BURGLAR SENTENCED TO EIGHT YEARS

Tampa, Florida - U.S. District Judge James D. Whittemore, today sentenced Mario Mercier, age 44, of Palm Harbor, to eight years' imprisonment followed by three years of supervised release for the sale or receipt of stolen property (six counts) and the interstate transportation of stolen property (one count). Mercier was found guilty on October 15, 2007.

According to court documents, from 2004 through 2006, Mercier burglarized or was involved in the burglarizing of aircrafts at more than twenty private airports in at least eight states. Mercier stole approximately \$168,000 in avionics from the burglarized aircrafts. Mercier then shipped the stolen avionics across state lines, where he resold the stolen avionics to third parties. Mercier, an FAA-certified airman (certified private pilot), was an aviation parts broker, specializing in certain avionics equipment, such as ground-to-air radios, air-to-air radios, ground positioning satellite (GPS) receivers. It was this type of equipment that he stole and resold. As stated in open court, Mercier's tampering with avionics presented a risk of danger to those who flew in the burglarized aircraft. As also stated in open court, this was Mercier's ninth conviction.

The case was investigated by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas N. Palermo.